



Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554

June 22, 2005

The Honorable Michael Bilirakis  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2408 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-0909

Dear Congressman Bilirakis:

Thank you for your letter, dated May 18, 2005, in which you note that several of your constituents have contacted you concerning recent Commission proposals regarding the use of wireless telephones in airborne aircraft. In particular, your constituents are concerned that the use of cell phones on airplanes could interfere with on board navigational instruments, and might allow terrorists to better coordinate an attack on the United States. You ask that we provide you with our thoughts regarding this issue.

On February 15, 2005, the Commission released a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Notice)* in WT Docket No. 04-435 that proposes to relax the Commission's current ban on the use of 800 MHz cellular telephones in airborne aircraft, including airplanes. In 1991, the Commission adopted the current ban on the airborne use of cell phones out of concern that such use would interfere with terrestrial cellular networks. In contrast, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulates the use of cellular telephones, as well as other transmitting portable electronic devices (T-PEDs), on airplanes, due to concern that such devices might interfere with aircraft communications and navigation systems.

Since 1991, advances in technology appear to address the Commission's initial concerns of interference that warranted adoption of the ban. Consequently, the Commission believes that it may now be possible for the traveling public to use personal cell phones while airborne without increasing the risk of interference to cellular systems on the ground. Accordingly, in the *Notice*, the Commission proposes to relax the ban on the airborne use of cellular telephones so long as the phones are controlled by a "pico cell" installed onboard private or commercial aircraft that directs the handsets to operate at or near their lowest applicable power settings. It also seeks comment on the practicality of an industry-initiated solution that would enable use of airborne cellular units without the FCC having to mandate technical rules. Finally, the *Notice* seeks comment as to whether the Commission should allow licensees to provide 800 MHz cellular service to airborne wireless units on a secondary basis, subject to certain technical limitations that would ensure no interference to terrestrial operations.

The Honorable Michael Bilirakis

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I appreciate your interest in this matter. While I can not comment on a pending matter, your letter, as well as this response, will be placed in the record of this proceeding. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or Guy Benson, Mobility Division, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, at 202-418-2946, if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Linda Chang', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Linda Chang  
Associate Chief, Mobility Division  
Wireless Telecommunications Bureau

MICHAEL BILIRAKIS  
9TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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WORLDWIDE WEB PAGE:  
[www.house.gov/bilirakis](http://www.house.gov/bilirakis)



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0909

May 18, 2005

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PLEASE RESPOND TO:

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Federal Communications Commission  
Congressional Liaison  
1919 M Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Sir or Madam:

I have been contacted by several of my constituents regarding the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) new proposal to allow the use of cell phones on airline flights.

In summary, my constituents are concerned that the use of cell phones on flights will interfere with navigational instruments and will allow terrorists to better coordinate an attack on the United States.

I would appreciate your thoughts regarding this issue. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact James Robertson of my Washington D.C. office.

Sincerely yours,

*Mike Bilirakis*  
Michael Bilirakis  
Member of Congress

MB:jr